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# CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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### **CAL FIRE Highlights the Importance of Trees in California** *2015 California Arbor Week Poster Contest Announced*

**Sacramento** – Trees are an essential part of California’s climate and are vital to improving air quality and conserving water. To help educate Californians on the value that trees provide to building successful, healthy cities and neighborhoods, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California ReLeaf are announcing the annual statewide Arbor Week poster contest for students in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Students are asked to create original artwork based on the theme **“We Need Trees and Trees Need Us”**. Submissions are due to California ReLeaf by February 13, 2015. Winners will be featured at the State Fair and awarded cash prizes provided by the California Community Forests Foundation.

CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf are partnering to encourage cities, nature groups, schools, and youth organizations to celebrate California Arbor Week by planting trees in their communities. California ReLeaf is an alliance of community-based groups, individuals, businesses, and government agencies working to protect the environment by planting and caring for trees and the state’s urban and community forests.

“Trees are vital, functional parts of our communities, our homes and yards, and our lives”, said CAL FIRE Deputy Director Duane Shintaku. “This is especially true during times of challenging drought conditions. Focused education for California’s youth is one of the most effective ways we can increase awareness of the important roles trees play in California and the many benefits they provide to the communities in which we live.”

The goals of Arbor Week include educating Californians about trees, encouraging tree planting, teaching elementary school children the environmental, social, and economic benefits of trees, and protecting the state’s valuable natural resources.

“One of the numerous benefits of trees is that they make California’s cities and towns healthier places to live”, said Cindy Blain, Executive Director of California ReLeaf. “Children who have access to nature and green spaces to play and learn are more active, have lower incidences of obesity, concentrate better in school, and demonstrate healthier social behaviors. Planting and caring for trees means investing in a better future for our children and California.”

Contest rules, as well as educational materials related to the value of trees, community benefits of trees, jobs in the urban and community forestry field, and tree identification can be downloaded at [www.arborweek.org/contests](http://www.arborweek.org/contests). The contest is sponsored by California ReLeaf, CAL FIRE, and the California Community Forests Foundation.

California Arbor Week runs March 7-14 every year to mark famed horticulturist Luther Burbank’s birthday and to raise awareness of the benefits of trees in our communities. In 2011, legislation was passed to define California Arbor Week in statute. Visit [www.arborweek.org](http://www.arborweek.org) for more information.